

Reef Check in Japan

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Reef Check

Reef Check is a voluntary, community-based monitoring protocol designed to measure the 'health' of coral reefs on a global scale, by measuring a few key coral reef organisms. Reef Check is managed by the Reef Check Foundation at the University of California, USA. Monitoring is undertaken every year and data is collected by trained divers, local residents, and coral reef scientists. Reef Check aims to: 1) provide scientific data to further our understanding of anthropogenic impacts upon coral reefs globally, and 2) promote public awareness of coral reefs to avoid further human impacts.

Reef Check is an important partner of the ICRI (International Coral Reef Initiative) and GCRMN (Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network), and the data collected is offered to the GCRMN and to ReefBase (a global coral reef database).

Dissemination of Reef Check data is the responsibility of the Reef Check coordinators within each coun-

try. In Japan, there are two coordinators working from within the Coral Network. The Coral Network organizes briefings and study sessions, develops execution tools, translates manuals into Japanese, manages and maintains the Japanese web site, and seeks out sponsorship and support.

Reef Check activity results

The details of involvement over the past eight years in Japan are shown in Table 1. The reason why neither the number of sites nor the number of participants has increased in 2003 was that many teams could not carry out monitoring due to typhoons and high waves. In 2004, Sakuraguchi on Ishigaki Island, Chichijima, and south of Sotobanare Island off the northwest of Iriomote Island were added as new monitoring sites. Although it was abandoned, there were also plans to add Tanabe Bay in Kii Peninsula, Chiibishi off Okinawa Island, and Tokashiki Island as new monitoring sites.

Diver awareness toward coral reef environment

conservation has clearly increased in recent years in Japan. In order to widen the opportunity for participation divers, Coral Network is planning to increase the number of working teams. For that purpose, raising the awareness of local host organizers (e.g., local administrations, Non-profit Organizations (NPOs), diving services) may be a top priority.

Reef Check team

The majority of the teams undertaking Reef Check in Japan are volunteers. The organizers are: 12 teams from joint-hosts of diving services and NPOs, 2 teams from diving services, 6 teams from NPOs, and 2 teams from local governments. Coral Network acts as either a host, or joint host, and hopes to continue playing a collaborative role among scientists, local residents, and volunteers. Participation by local scientists has recently increased and we plan to invite more scientists whose residence, or research field, is close to the monitoring sites. In fact, the majority of voluntary participants, excluding professional divers, are from remote locations. We plan to

include more local residents by holding seminars and public relations activities.

Future issues

Reef Check is aiming at community-based-surveys. In that respect, it is necessary to involve more local divers, diving services, and local communities. We hope to further expand and enhance Reef Check activities in Japan.

Table 1. Number of sites and participants involved in Reef Check in Japan over the past eight years.

Year	Sites	Participants
1997	2	12
1998	12	74
1999	11	133
2000	16	ca. 190
2001	17	ca. 250
2002	21	ca. 300
2003	22	ca. 300